

WALL STREET JOURNAL

25 January 1984

~~ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 32~~

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

How Now on Cheating?

President Reagan Monday sent a 50-page secret document to Congress detailing what the administration called "an expanding pattern of Soviet violations or possible violations of arms control agreements." Press coverage was muted, as the administration apparently hoped it would be. The New York Times used quote marks in such a way as to imply doubts about the validity of what it called a "fact sheet" describing the report for public benefit. The principal implication the president himself had drawn was that "better treaty drafting" and more workable verification procedures would be needed in future arms negotiations.

In short, few people in or out of government are ready yet to face the true implication of Soviet cheating: It is extremely dangerous to U.S. and Free World security to negotiate and abide by arms agreements that the Soviets do not intend to keep. The message this American vacillation sends to Moscow's generals and politburo chieftains is that they can cheat at no cost. The Americans, they will believe, have been immobilized by the politics of arms control—the hope and belief that arms control treaties do in fact limit the construction and deployment of arms.

Fewer than 10 of some 41 Soviet violations listed in a recent Heritage Foundation study are mentioned in the president's report. But even the four termed as definite cheating are profound.

Most important is the construction of radar stations outside the area allowed by the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty of 1972. In combination with other ABM violations not cited, such as radar testing and surface-to-air missile deployments nearby, the radar sites form a Soviet ABM capability that goes far beyond the treaty restrictions limiting such defenses to either a capital city or a missile field. With the Soviets building screens against our bombers and submarines, plus extensive civil defenses, the effectiveness of our deterrent force be-

comes increasingly suspect. To the extent that the Soviets gain an edge, their threatening propaganda messages to the West become more credible, as we learned last summer when they stimulated a significant unilateral disarmament groundswell in the U.S. and Europe.

Other Soviet violations include development of an illegal second nuclear missile, the SS-X-25 or PL-5, a drastic addition to the firepower of the old SS-13. Some 14 nuclear tests above the limits of the 1963 test-ban treaty have given the Soviets high confidence in the power of their arsenal. Finally, the report charges that the Soviets have been encrypting missile tests above allowable levels. This prevents our fully monitoring Soviet capabilities and, of course, treaty violations.

Last week, a group led by former Carter negotiator Paul Warnke met to chastise Mr. Reagan for "insufficient" evidence of violations that lack "strategic significance" anyway. The administration shouldn't be raising questions that might prevent us from entering into further agreements, they concluded. Aside from the tortured logic of that argument, it's hard to know what you don't know; if the Soviets have been encoding their tests, who can say what they're building? Former CIA analyst David Sullivan estimates that Moscow has stockpiled more than 4,000 delivery vehicles, compared with 2,250 allowed under SALT and 1,850 in the U.S. arsenal.

Meanwhile, the U.S. is required to significantly weaken its own forces. Since Ronald Reagan took office, America has dismantled or has made plans to dismantle 26% to 33% of its existing megatonnage, mostly to conform to SALT II. As Mr. Reagan noted in a recent speech, the U.S. nuclear arsenal is at a 25-year low.

Back when these treaties were being negotiated, a phalanx of U.S. leaders—Henry Kissinger, Melvin Laird, Gerard Smith, James Schlesinger, Harold Brown, Zbigniew Brzezinski—went before Congress to promise that if a situation like today's ever developed, we would cancel out. In 1972,

Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Laird told Sen. Henry Jackson that substitution of heavy missiles for the SS-11 would be considered a clear-cut violation. Yet when the Soviets deployed the SS-19, four times the throw-weight of the SS-11, no abrogation followed.

Even Jimmy Carter was clear about the consequences of cheating. He told Congress in 1979 that Soviet violation of just one key clause, the encryption provisions, would undercut the whole treaty. His defense secretary, Harold Brown, outlined a sensible U.S. policy before Congress: "The issue will not be whether we could prove a case to a jury. We do not need proof beyond a reasonable doubt, nor even evidence we can discuss in detail," he said. "If a problem were not resolved . . . I would not hesitate to recommend . . . abrogation."

No doubt some advisers have been telling the president how clever it would be to accuse the Soviets of cheating but do nothing, playing to doves and hawks alike. That strategy may be worse than ignoring violations altogether. The Kremlin now knows that even if it's caught and accused, the Westerners will issue a pardon.

By failing to take actions that follow logically from the evidence, Mr. Reagan casts doubt on the evidence itself. By his response so far to Soviet cheating, Mr. Reagan is telling the public not to take him seriously.